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THE NEXT PRESENTATION.

LENGTH of days is said, upon the highest authority, to be one of Man's chiefest blessings, and it is not the intention of this writer to contravene that authoritative statement. Still, what was an advantage to the patriarchs may not be equally convenient now a days; and if a gentleman persists in holding property, in which he has only a life-interest, as if he were possessed of the fee-simple, and might enjoy it in perpetuity, he must be prepared to meet with indignation. 'Live and let live' should be everybody's motto; and excess in everything—even in vitality—is especially unbecoming in a divine. Nobody, beyond his own immediate friends and relatives, has, of course, a right to object to a curate's living on to any length of time. But if a man with a good benefice, like myself, enjoy the same beyond the reasonable hopes of the purchaser of the next presentation—beyond the limit, that is, which compilers of annuity tables have set down as his legitimate average—he cannot escape without a hint or two that he is standing in the way of other people.

I trust that what I have to say may serve as a warning to persons of sensitive nature who may be thinking of entering the ministry of the Church of England, and of investing their money in her at the same time. If they do buy a Living for themselves, let it be the Adwoson; or if they be so rash as to secure a mere life-interest in her (as I have done), let them be well convinced beforehand—would they avoid the inconveniences of which I have to tell—that they have not an immoderate share of vital stamina. They must by no means think that general debility will be any guarantee for this, for I have known a man to be put into a very excellent living merely as a stop-gap, and actually chosen, on account of his many admirable infirmities, who yet retained his post for half a century, and outlived the grandson of the man who first waited for his shoes. The circumstances of this most unjustifiable event occurred within my own knowledge, and in the following manner:

The family living of the Yellowboys fell vacant while their second son, Euphranor (whom they had destined for that preferment), was still at college, and before he was legally qualified to take that responsible charge upon his shoulders. They therefore looked

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about them for a 'warming-pan;' that is to say, a gentleman in orders, who would be content to hold the place until the young man was of fit age, receiving the full stipend in the meantime in return for the obligation. But not only is there an ecclesiastical canon which forbids this very convenient and not uncommon arrangement—a fact which, I fear, would not of itself have deterred the head of the house of Yellowboys from adopting it—but examples are on record of 'warming-pans' who have refused to remove from comfortable quarters at the appointed time, protesting that the bed was *their own*, and that they meant to lie upon it. To obviate any risk of this kind, Yellowboys senior made a gift of the next presentation to a certain cousin of his, not so ancient, indeed, as was desirable, but afflicted with such a complication of disorders as promised, if there was any faith to be placed in doctors, to carry him off in two or three years at the very latest.

The Rev. Joseph Yellowboys, on receiving this good tidings, pricked up his drooping ears, returned, with thanks to his bishop, the 'perpetual' curacy in the Fen country (where nobody lives any time to speak of, even if there is no inundation), and came up rejoicing (and, I think, on crutches) to the rectory of Butterton Magna. He read himself in in such a quavering voice, that Squire Yellowboys doubted whether the powers of his relative would even last out the very moderate span that was expected of them; and his cough throughout that evening—for I was a child staying at the Park with the young Yellowboys at the time, and came down to dessert, and met him—his cough, I say, would have been music to his heir, if he had happened to have had one, which at that time was not the case. He was lame with both legs; he had only one eye, and even that had an involuntary rotatory movement like that of a dying firework; he was thinner, and rather more dried-up looking than a red herring; and he had several most serious maladies (as was affirmed on excellent authority), beside the more ordinary ailments—such as asthma and bronchitis—which were patent to all who set eyes upon him.

Yet, poor Euphranor Yellowboys waited for Butterton Magna for ten years, and then, instead of getting his living, died; and Euphranor's son died, expectant, after him; and now Euphranor's son's son (as I have just heard) is dead likewise, and the Rev. Joseph Yellowboys is rector still.

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Again, in the case of Sheepington, the fattest living in the gift of St Boniface, Oxford, what a shocking miscalculation there was *there!* The great tithes alone of that place, they tell me, are over three thousand a year. It has capital shooting in the very midst of his Grace of Muddleborough's preserves, who is therefore always on his best behaviour towards the incumbent; and dissent is almost unknown in the parish. It is altogether much too good a thing to go by seniority, and therefore the struggle to secure Sheepington when it chances to fall vacant (which is somehow very seldom) is something unparalleled. It resembles, in one respect at least, the strife for good-service pensions given to deserving warriors. Each candidate exhibits his wounds and his decrepitude as so much claim upon the sympathies of the electors. The applicants for Sheepington, however, do not pretend that they owe these to hard usage in the cause of the church militant; they only say: 'Behold our sad—our really hopeless condition, electors! If you should but confer this boon upon us, the next presentation of it must needs fall to you within a very few years. Vote for Senior and Softening of the Brain! Vote for Octogenarian and Paralysis!'

Two eminent divines, neither of whom was destitute of good physical demerits, contended on the last occasion for this great clerical prize, and the votes, after the closest scrutiny, were declared equal. To elect one, would have been to mortally affront the other, and might have driven either (for the heart and liver were the parts affected in the two cases) into the grave at once; so the council determined to procrastinate. They elected the vice-principal of the college, a gentleman of a fabulous age, who weighed seventeen stone, and had not seen his own knees for thirty years.

'Let us try again,' said they, '*after a few months*, and then, perhaps, we shall have less difficulty in coming to a final decision.'

The majority of these sanguine individuals are now lying in St Boniface hys Chapelle, with neat mural tablets over them, which celebrate their virtues in the Latin tongue. Both the eminent divines have departed from this sublunary sphere; but the Rev. Methuselah Heviside still occupies the rectory of Sheepington, although he has been for many years unable to squeeze himself into its pulpit.

Now, in both these cases it has so happened that the long-lived rectors have been peculiarly fitted to bear with calmness the indignation which their conduct has excited. The Rev. Joseph Yellowboys (who married, by the by, within six months of his promotion, and has now several grandchildren) is quite unconscious, or at least appears to be so, of the disapproval of his relatives with respect to his absurd longevity. He openly expresses his belief that a man has a right to live as long as he can, without any regard to the pecuniary interests of others; and when he is reminded that there is moderation in all things, and that enough is as good as a feast, he begins to argue in a vicious circle. He says we must come round to the starting-point, and define what moderation really is, which changes (he contends) according to each man's circumstances: he was once, he confesses, wont to consider eighty as a tolerable age, which he now looks back upon as the prime of life; while that which he might reasonably have considered to be a feast while he was a curate in the Fens, he would hold to be a very indifferent dinner indeed at Butterson Magna.

As for the Rev. M. Heviside—'our Met,' as we call him in the Clerical Club—whenever the wrong he has been guilty of towards his college is mentioned, he laughs to that degree that I look to see it avenged upon the spot. He rolls like the *Great Eastern* in a sea, he coughs, he turns purple and black, and when his terrified wife (the *third* since his appointment to

Sheepington) does at last recover him by a method analogous to that recommended by Marshall Hall in the case of persons apparently drowned, he wheezes out: 'I *know* they're vexed, but I mean to keep it for half a century yet.' Which he most certainly will, if he can.

But neither of these two gentlemen, as may well be imagined, are of that sensitive and chivalrous nature which is doubtless yours, my young friends—as it is also mine, alas! My own simple, but truly touching story, reader, runs—if I can call that running which loiters so inexcusably—as follows:

It is many years ago—I confess it—since I bought my life-interest in the living which I still hold; but, on the other hand, I had myself a considerable time to wait.

'*To be Sold*—The Next Presentation to the living of Chauncey Bassett; tithe so much; glebe so big; rectory house in good repair; locality salubrious and picturesque. Age of present incumbent, 76.'

Such was the advertisement which met my eyes nearly half a century ago; dazzling enough to a young divine like myself, who had a few thousand pounds in the three per cents, the interest whereof, even with a curate's salary added, by no means made an income to marry upon—which seemed to me in those days the only legitimate object of all incomes.

My intended, Angelina, was, I felt confident, most admirably adapted for a clergyman's wife; but then she had certain tastes in the pony carriage and *moiré antique* directions which pointed out that her husband should be a beneficed clergyman. So I went to my guardian, and asked his opinion as to the purchase. This gentleman resided in Gray's Inn, where I used to think he must also have been born, with a wig on—must have sprung forth from the head of old Father Antic the Law armed *cap-à-pied*—so legal he was, so precise, so parchmenty, and with such very mercenary views regarding the most solemn subjects.

'In these speculative investments in church-property, young gentleman'—he began.

'My dear sir,' interrupted I blushing, 'I have not contemplated this affair, I hope, entirely from that point of view.'

'In these excessively speculative investments,' continued he, speaking *through me* (as though I was not a substantial form at all) to *Briggs on Conveyancing*, who stood on the opposite bookshelf—'investments in which two lives are concerned, and the calculations are proportionally complicated, we cannot be too cautious. The circumstance of the incumbent being seventy-six, will doubtless render the patron anxious to come to terms, inasmuch as if he was so unfortunate as to die before the transfer was completed, he would actually have to *give the living away!* On the other hand, incumbents of seventy-six are often comparatively young people; and you perceive that the advertisement admits—it is most incautiously worded, and so far affords hope of an easy bargain—it admits that the situation is salubrious. However, I will make every inquiry, and you may come to me in a fortnight for my best advice.'

At the appointed time I revisited my astute guardian—whom it would be impertinent, because totally inadequate, to compare, in respect to his detective qualities, with a ferret—and found him in possession of all the facts connected with my contemplated purchase. The actual patron of Chauncey Bassett was a gentleman of the Jewish persuasion, whose father had had pecuniary transactions with the grandfather of the present squire of the parish, from which the Gentle had escaped with his estate, but had left the advowson of the living in the hands of the Hebrew. It seemed very odd, and indeed wrong, to me at that period, that a Jew should have a Christian living, even indirectly, in his gift; but my guardian bade me take comfort, on the ground that I myself, at least,

would be under no obligation to him, but would have to buy it with hard cash.

'My only fear,' added he with an air of reflection, 'is lest Mr Levi and the parson may be confederated in the business, and that the latter is in reality a younger man in stamina than he chooses to seem. His appearance (though I saw him on a Monday, just after his chief day's work; to be sure) is most promising; feeble, fragile, and with a certain quavering of the voice, from which one would argue the best, if it was certain all was on the square. But if the patron should have made it worth the incumbent's while to look his very worst, in order that the bidding may rise—why, then—you see, young gentleman, what a *very* speculative investment this sort of church-property is!'

'But, my dear sir,' ejaculated I, aghast and shuddering, 'is it probable?—'

'Nay, sir,' returned the lawyer with irritation, 'I have nothing to do with that. It is certainly possible; and it is with possibilities that I, as your guardian, have to do.'

Eventually the Next Presentation became mine, or rather my guardian's, who, to humour a certain prejudice of the law against the convenience called Simony, affected to buy it himself, and then handed it over to me; and after an interval of ten years, during which I hope I never wished the situation of Chauncey Bassett less salubrious by one breath of summer air, the incumbent became at length recumbent, and I was installed rector in his stead.

Since that welcome period, up to a very recent date, Angelina, and afterwards Caroline and myself, have lived a life of almost unruffled calm. Children were born unto us every year—as is almost the universal custom among the clergy—and none, thank Heaven, were taken from us. I have held in my arms at the baptismal-font well-nigh half the parish, and there is not a man, woman, or child within it with whom I am not acquainted. The squire—he that was 'the young squire' when I first arrived—is ailing, which at his years he cannot but expect to be, but nobly seconds with his purse any proposition of mine for the benefit of the Poor. The Vestry, although not exactly liberal, I have always found to be pliant if manipulated with tact and good-humour. The meeting-house at Ranter's End has been happily out of repair for some time, and the funds, I am told, are not forthcoming, even to set the roof in order. Our new bishop—the fourth, by the by, that has had the diocese in my time—is courteous, and thoughtful for others; he complimented Angelina upon her apricot jam at luncheon after our last confirmation in a manner she will never forget. Until within the last few months, in short, I was the happy rector of a model parish, with as few causes of annoyance as can be reasonably expected in a country where church-rates have been but recently saved from abolition only by a majority of one. Too great Content, it was held by the ancients, provokes the anger of the gods; and perhaps I was too comfortable. My worst enemy, however, can certainly no longer lay this to my charge. The thin end of the wedge—to use a metaphor which has been made their own by the Great Conservative Party of my native land—was inserted in the heart of my domestic life in April last, and the mallet has been falling, and the breach widening ever since.

The first blow was struck in this manner: I was engaged in the peaceful occupation of gardening a little before luncheon-time, when there drove up to the door a fly and pair from the railway station, bringing a strange gentleman of about my own age, and apparently of the legal profession. I hurried in to pay those pious duties of hospitality which in the country have not as yet fallen into disuse, and learned from my visitor that his name was Filer, and that he had the misfortune to be an attorney. Some men might have been dissatisfied with this information, and have asked him what was his business at Chauncey Bassett,

but as the bell was just then ringing for the children's dinner, I only asked him in to lunch. The number of my offspring seemed to astonish him, and he took in them an evident interest, which could not but be pleasing to Caroline—for Angelina, poor dear, was taken from me many years back.

'This is your youngest, I conclude, sir,' observed he, taking Adolphus John's left ear between his fingers, who, considering himself to be a young man, and aspiring to 'stick-ups,' resented that familiarity with some dignity.

'Yes,' said I, rather tartly, 'it is;' for why he should have taken upon himself to conclude anything of the sort, I was at a loss to understand.

'Thank you; I will have another help,' responded the old gentleman presently, to an invitation of my wife, who was superintending the cold beef: 'the air of your down-country is truly appetising. What health your husband seems to enjoy, madam! He looks as robust as men in London who are only half his age.'

'Thank you, sir,' responded the hostess; 'he is very well.'

'He is very gray, however,' remarked the visitor with startling abruptness.

'At our age,' retorted my wife, with some asperity, 'we must be fortunate indeed not to be gray.'

'True, madam—true. If I were not perfectly bald, as you perceive, I should doubtless be gray myself. You are looking for the salt, reverend sir; permit me. I daresay, now, you find your sight begin to fail you a little?'

'Well,' said I, good-humouredly, 'I do wear spectacles now and then, I confess.'

'You do wear spectacles now and then, do you? Ah! Now, do you wear *strong* spectacles?'

I began to think this man must be a person of extraordinary benevolence, notwithstanding his acknowledged profession, and I therefore detailed to him certain difficulties which I had lately met with in getting my sight suited.

'Dear me,' said he, after listening to me with an appearance of the greatest interest; 'your lungs and hearing are, however, I remark, in the most excellent order. May I ask—you seemed to have a little difficulty with that crust just now—may I ask how you are off for teeth?'

I was about to explain, for I don't see why one should make a secret of such matters, how much more comfortable I have felt with those that Mr Wrencham procured for me last autumn, when I perceived my wife to be telegraphing to me, as plain as eyes could speak, to take the man away, because there was only pudding enough for the children; so I asked him to have a stroll with me in the garden. 'There, at least,' said I to myself, 'he will disclose his business, and leave off asking questions about my bodily health.' I opened the glass-door that leads from my study on to our little lawn, and motioned that he should pass out first.

'Thank you,' returned he; 'I should much prefer your leading the way. How well you walk—how exceedingly well you walk; you put your feet down with all the decision and firmness of a young man. I think, however, I detect a slight relaxation in the muscles of the left leg. They must of course be shrinking.'

'Sir,' said I, turning sharply round upon him, as he stood making some memorandum in his note-book, 'what business is it of yours, confound you, whether my muscles are shrinking or not?'

'My dear sir,' returned the lawyer, laying his finger upon my shoulder soothingly, 'it is no business of mine whatever. I am employed by a young fellow who has just taken orders, and has confidence in my judgment. He sent me down on purpose to look at you; and you look a great deal too well, my dear sir, a vast deal too well, for my client, I do assure you. Mr Levi is putting far too high a price upon the

concern, according to present appearances. You bought, you know, the next presentation of this living of his grandfather, yourself?

'So I did,' said I, with an involuntary sigh—'years and years ago: I remember the very day I did so as though it was yesterday.'

'The dickens you do!' ejaculated Mr Filer with irritation. 'Why, your memory must be as good as ever, then! That is a great point against Levi's offer, that is. Don't you ever find your head swim?'

'It is advertised in the papers, I suppose,' said I, without replying to the question, for I was looking sadly round upon the dear old place, which seemed as though it was about to pass out of my hands at once.

'Yes,' returned he, 'of course it's advertised, and I must say that it's very well done. It leads one to expect better things—I am looking at it from a professional point of view, you will understand—it hints that almost immediate occupation may be looked for. There will be scores of people coming down here upon a fool's errand. I left a fellow at the railway station even now, who will arrive with the same object as myself this very afternoon. He wanted to share my fly with me, but I knew better than that. He might have telegraphed "Buy" to his man in the city, and taken the wind out of my sails at once. However, he may telegraph what he likes now. I was particularly told to see your Chancel—for my young friend is High Church—but since I have seen you, sir, that is more than enough. I thank you, however, for your hospitality. Excuse what may have looked like rudeness in my conduct to your good lady: business is business, and must be attended to before all things—that's my motto. I wish you good-day, sir, and a long life. Here is the gentleman I spoke of coming down the lane. Observe how he is turning up the soil with his umbrella, to see what sort of a glebe you have!'

Mr Filer, attorney-at-law, spoke truly. Scores of people have come, and are still coming down to Chauncey Bassett, if not on a fool's errand, at least on an errand which does not seem to give them much satisfaction. Through no fault of my own, I feel that I am incurring the resentment of a great many worthy persons. A gentleman of seventy-two is expected to look a great deal less hearty and florid than the unfortunate strength of my constitution will permit me to do. One gentleman even hinted at being reimbursed in his travelling expenses, on the ground of having been enticed to this secluded spot upon false pretences. On the other hand, if I was to de cease suddenly, and before the transaction was concluded with any of the parties, Mr Levi would be reduced to the desperate necessity of *giving away* (by proxy) the next presentation, since it would be illegal, under such circumstances, to sell it. Conceive the anxiety of my Hebrew friend in that emergency to discover the very oldest divine in the Church of England that could be got to hold it; and how miserable would the last days of that venerable man be rendered by people coming to look at him!

The reflection that the older I grow the more tempting will be Mr Levi's advertisement, and consequently the more numerous my inquiring friends, is by no means a soothing one. I wish from my heart that he was of a less grasping disposition, or else that one of the candidates for my to-be-vacant pulpit would bid a little higher, so that this matter might be settled. I should not mind one man taking an antagonistic interest in the state of my health; but, as it is, I feel as though I were the common enemy of the human race—both male and female. It is not uncommon for ladies to accompany their husbands to 'see how they like the look of the place,' and these always ask to be shown over the up-stair rooms, with an eye to improvements and alterations, when your humble servant, the present writer, shall have been taken out of his own bed-

chamber feet foremost. One 'engaged' young man confessed to me, with a charming frankness, that my drawing-room was just the sort of apartment in which he should like to see his *fiancée*—his Angelina—installed; 'but then,' added he, with a reproachful look at the calves of my legs, 'there is no knowing when one is to get it.'

I really begin to think that some mutual arrangement with Mr Levi (such as I was so ready to reprobate in my younger days) would not be altogether unjustifiable. If I chose to sit for half a day with my head tied up, and my legs in flannel, for instance—as I suppose I have a perfect right to do—these people would bite at once at Chauncey Bassett, I know. As it is, I am obliged to procure alleviation for myself by a pious fraud. On one occasion, an applicant called while I was exercising the colt; and the servant who answered the front-door bell informed the gentleman her master was engaged.

'Exercising the colt!' cried he; 'then I have been most grossly imposed upon. Coachman, drive me back to the station.'

Since then, I am afraid that 'exercising the colt' has been rather a stereotyped reply at the door of the rectory of Chauncey Bassett, when any stranger comes to it and asks to look at the house, and whether the present writer is at home.

THE GROWTH OF TREES.

In the consideration of a tree, we have to deal, not with a product of crystallisation, such as the lead tree, or the dendritic formations on a frozen window, but with matter living and organised; it is no stiff unyielding form, but an elastic and easily impressible body, whose movements are in fact as fluctuating as those of the mercurial column in the tube of a barometer.

And first let us contemplate vegetative nature in her simpler forms; let us study the life-history of one of those lowly native annuals which we see in spring growing so abundantly by the roadside, or in the field or forest. From the first breaking forth of life in the seed, there is continual motion and activity, a regular cycle of leaves, until growth culminates; the plant then flowers, again arrives at the condition of a seed, enters on the stage of rest, and the entire axis and all its appendages, its roots, leaves, and flowers die, undergo chemical decomposition, and disappear from the earth's surface. For into the seed the exhausted vitality of the plant has again retired. Then comes the sleep of winter, till the onward march of nature brings back to the earth the heat and light of spring, reawakens the dormant life-energies in the seed, which slowly commences the same instructive and deeply interesting life-movements.

In forest trees, or woody perennials, there is the same continual change from a state of rest to that of motion; but in this case the powers of life in the seed are much greater. Hence the trunk of a tree, which rises at first from the seed as an herbaceous stem, becomes more or less woody towards the close of the growing season, and is not destroyed when it enters on the stage of rest in winter. Only the foliage perishes, and this is renewed each season upon fresh shoots from the terminal and lateral buds; in fact, the stem with its branches is the only enduring part of the tree. In some trees, these fluctuations of growth, or vibratory movements between a state of rest and that of motion, last for hundreds, and even thousands of years, until the herbaceous stem and leaves have become metamorphosed, and there stands on the site it once occupied a tree, with its massive trunk, far extended branches, and noble canopy of foliage. But the tree, like the lowly annual which it overshadows, is compelled at last to pay back the debt due to nature, and must yield to the earth

and air those borrowed elements out of which it originated.

These fluctuations or vibrations of growth in trees may be compared to the rising and the falling of a wave, which attains a certain elevation over the ocean's surface, and then sinks into its depths and disappears. In the life of a tree we may distinguish three principal waves of growth, or accelerated and retarded vital movements.

The Annual Wave.—During winter, the trees of temperate climates, like the seeds in the ground, are in a state of passive vitality. Life exists in both, although no vital movement is perceptible, for there is no chemical decomposition or separation of their parts.

But winter has gone with its cold darkness and storms, and spring has come with its warm bright sun and gentle breezes. The stage of rest is passed, and reinvigorated nature awakens from repose. Slowly emerges the plant out of the seed, and the new shoots and leaves out of the buds. There is again continual motion and activity, the same cycle of appendages of leaves, flowers, and fruits. Another ring of wood and bark has been formed about the tree, and new growths of wood have been added to its extremities. The sun continues to drive the vegetable machinery until the year draws to its close, and the light and heat received from him gradually diminish in their intensity; motion and activity in the plant-world now cease in the same ratio, until at length the solar force is so enfeebled that the vegetable machinery stops. The tree is deprived of the leaves and flowers of spring, and of the fruits of autumn. It has again entered on the stage of rest. All the delicate growing-points on its naked and exposed surface are protected by the scales of the buds, every pore is closed and sealed up against the weather, either by a covering of tomentum or wool, or by excretions expressly elaborated for that purpose. That naked, defoliated tree yet lives, but its vitality slumbers. These yearly vibrations of growth are faithfully recorded in the annual wood-rings visible on the cross-section of the stem.

But this is not all, for if the reader will examine the young branchlets and shoots of the tree when it is denuded of its foliage, he will find that each branchlet and shoot is characterised by its own peculiar fluctuation, and that the same annual wave of accelerated and retarded growth which pervades the whole tree, pervades each of its parts. In the annual wave of growth which pervades each year's shoot, there are three distinct stages which offer themselves for consideration. Toward the bottom of the shoot is formed a series of perfectly undeveloped internodes, which support the covering leaves or scales, and which are visible after their fall in a series of closely approximated annular scars; then follow the partially developed internodes or naked intervals of stem between the leaves; and then the principal internodes, which form by their expansion the main growth of the shoot. But the vitality of the leaves above the centre of the shoot becomes more and more enfeebled, because they come to their perfection later in the season, when the heat and light of the sun, those stimulants of vegetable vitality, decrease. The internodes between the upper leaves consequently approach each other, and the leaves diminish in size, until finally we arrive at the *punctum vegetationis* or vegetative point which gives origin to the terminal bud at the summit of the shoot. The same wave of growth which pervades the whole tree thus pervades each of its shoots or yearly growths at its extremities. *The whole tree is thus seen in each of its parts, for the green herbaceous shoot which forms the growth of the season at the extremities of the branches, is, with its foliage and fluctuations, an exact copy of the herbaceous growth made by the tree itself during the first year of its life.*

The Daily Wave.—According to Treviranus, the

growth of trees is accelerated during the day, and retarded in the evening. The principal German physiologists appear to agree as to the fact that there is such a daily acceleration and retardation of growth, though they differ a little as to the precise time of its occurrence. This daily fluctuation is not at all unreasonable, for growth can only take place through the assimilation of formative material, and this mainly depends on the heat and light received from the sun. The vital energies of plants may possibly vary with the degree of the sun's elevation above the horizon, and they may recuperate to some extent during the night, like the animal creation. Some of the distinguished microscopists and physiologists of Germany think that these daily pulsations of growth have also left their mark in the interior of the tree, and that the fine layers in the thick walls of the wood and bast tissues have been produced by them.

The Life Wave.—This is that grand vibration of growth which extends through the whole period of the life of the tree, and which carries along with it all the smaller fluctuations of each day and each year. As the leaves of the tree are the true sources whence is derived the elaborated formative material used in the construction of its stem and branches, it necessarily follows that the growth of these parts depends on the amount of leaf-surface which is spread abroad by them in the atmosphere. Now, there is a continually increasing number of leaves developed during the first period in the life of a tree, and consequently an acceleration not only in the growth of each individual part of the tree, but of the entire tree itself in the same ratio. At first, growth takes place in the direction of the main axis or stem, till the tree has obtained its greatest height; the growth is then diverted to the leading branches, and the tree begins to spread out on all sides, and form its top or head, which is usually dome-shaped or hemispherical. The tree has now obtained its greatest elevation, spread, and maximum amount of foliage, and the wave of growth culminates. From this period in the life of the tree there is a progressive remission of growth, which becomes gradually more and more retarded. At first, there was a rapid increase annually in the number and length of the shoots, and in the breadth of the wood-rings; but now the tree has passed its prime, and the year's shoots become always shorter and more circumscribed; there is a decrease in the number of them annually, owing to the diminished vital activity of the leaves. Less woody matter is therefore necessarily formed, which at the same time continues to be spread over a constantly increasing amount of surface; for as the tree gets older, its stem and branches increase in their circumference or girth, hence the year's ring or growth in thickness becomes also smaller and smaller.

In the gradual expiration of growth at the extremities of the branches, when the tree has attained its greatest altitude, and passed the period of its prime, the following stages of remission may be distinctly observed: 1. A little annual development with some branching, yet so that the side-shoots appear as leaf-clusters, no internodes whatever being formed between them. 2. Only single shoots, a little developed, with here and there a bud formed, which has not vitality enough to expand into a leaf-cluster, and therefore remains on the side of the shoot as a bud. 3. No side-buds whatever, the terminal bud simply opening into a cluster of leaves, the whole of whose vital force is expended in the formation of the terminal bud, which contains in embryo the next year's leaf-cluster. A shoot will continue to unfold its terminal bud into leaf-clusters for ten, twenty, and even thirty years. A branch of the horse-chestnut tree, which the writer examined in Kensington Park, had in thirty-five years grown in this manner only eighteen inches. 4. The terminal bud pines, gradually

loses the power of unfolding itself, and finally dies. With the death of the terminal bud, and the cessation of the formation of any more leaves, the further growth of the branch is necessarily completely arrested. In this manner, branch after branch gradually ceases to grow, and then dies, until the powers of decay gain the ascendancy, and the whole tree at last perishes.

There is, then, in the development of the entire tree, one grand, all-pervading wave of growth, or an acceleration of the yearly growths made by all its parts up to a determined stage of culmination, and from thence to the end of its life a progressive remission follows. All its periodical changes from a state of rest to that of motion, those waves of growth of which we have spoken, have left an indelible impression in the solid parts of its fabric. All the bright and stormy days of its life, every wind that has shaken its foliage, and every rain-drop that has wetted its roots, have helped to mould its physical organisation, and make it just what it is.

An animal may continue to live after it ceases to grow, but with the tree it is otherwise, for the tree continues to grow as long as it lives, and when it ceases to grow in any of its parts, as, for instance, its branches, the life of those branches necessarily and inevitably terminates. The death of the tree therefore takes place from within to without, or from its centre to its circumference, the innermost parts of its stem dying first, and the stem becoming hollow, as is well known; and it also dies downwards at the same time, or from the extremities of its branches to its roots.

THE LOUNGER IN THE EXHIBITION.

THE FIRST SHILLING-DAY.

On this June 2, 1862, and at about 10 o'clock A.M., there is a very singular little crowd collected at the gate of the World's Fair in Brompton. What is wanting in number, is more than made up in variety and social contrast. There is a gracious princess (upon whose timeliness it was remarked that she was determined to have a good shilling's worth), and there is a female charity-school; there is the commander-in-chief of the British army, and there are the Duke of York's boys (but not of royal descent), in homeliest scarlet. There are ladies of fashion, varying from fifteen to twenty feet in circumference, clutching the morocco case that holds their season tickets; and there is Mistress Prudence Housewife, from the agricultural districts, scorning any such artificial extension, and with a face that gives back ray for ray to the summer sun. There are Parsees, with those ridiculous split hats of theirs, in which one so longs to insert something; Hebrew Jews, with that length of beard which defies all Christian competition, notwithstanding hog's-lard is denied to them; and one North American Indian in the picturesque though inadequate costume of his race, with a green cotton umbrella added.

The mechanic element, however, which ought to have been most observable, is somewhat lacking, and the pale shrewd faces of those whose labour is not under the open sky, are rare; the men of the forge, the maids of the mill, have not even shillings to spend, this year, alas! but are gazing helpless and almost hopeless towards the West—where their sun rises—for a break in the night-black clouds of war. There are, however, a few supple-jointed, eager-eyed, leaden-coloured men, of whom it may be predicated that they will start off, as soon as yonder doors are open, straight for the western annexe—to the machinery.

There are one or two unhappy persons, who, not possessing season tickets, still consider that their presence in a mere shilling throng requires some explanation: their goodly habiliments bespeak,

they hope, that they are *among* it, without being *of* it, but they are glad to get any confidential opportunity, such as a crowd always offers, of informing strangers how the apparent social inconsistency has arisen. The present writer found himself at one time in a very limited area, from which it was impossible to escape, impinged upon by a gentleman of this description, whose apparel, if he bought it at first hand, must have cost him a very considerable sum.

'Well-behaved crowd, sir,' observed this superior person condescendingly; 'no pushing to speak of, and an uncommon interesting sight. I confess, I like the humbler classes, and have always found them—there should be plenty of police about, of course—I have always found them exceedingly civil. Often been here before, sir? Ah, I suppose so. *So have I.*'

When a man is telling you an untruth, and perceives that you are aware of it, he affords a study, of which our sculptors have not as yet taken advantage: they present us with a human figure, indeed, more or less nude, with its finger up to its nose, and they write underneath it *Falsehood*; but if it were not for that last precaution, we certainly should not know what was intended. The true liar whom one meets in society twenty times a day remains unchiseled. One reason of this is, I suppose, that the eye, which cannot so well be delineated in statuary, is the chief seat of expression when a gentleman fibs. While even the accomplished Tufter (of the Old Bailey) remarks casually that he was dining yesterday with the Lord Chancellor, there is a certain indecision in his eye, which emboldens me to reply: 'And so was I,' upon the instant, to my learned friend's intense confusion. So, while with his voice my exclusive acquaintance affirmed that he had been a constant visitor to the Exhibition at prices more suitable to his condition, his eyes refused altogether to be parties to that deceptive statement.

'It will be better now than it was,' continued he; 'things will be more in order. I am told—in fact, I know the rain used to come in, in all directions. A gentleman of my acquaintance* was nearly meeting with his death in the transept only last week. A putty-knife fell point-foremost from the roof, and quivered, sir, in the flooring within a few inches of where he stood. Take another case. A gentleman was standing under the dome, and suddenly found himself poked violently in the small of the back with the point of an umbrella; he (naturally) jumped forward a few paces; and at the same instant, there was a tremendous crash behind him. A good-natured stranger (whom he was about to give into the custody of the police for an assault) had seen the pane descending, and saved a fellow-creature from the fate of *Æschylus*, who perished, as you doubtless remember, in a similar manner. Take another case. [He checked these fearful occurrences off on his fingers with the air of one who, having plenty to tell, did not want to go over the ground twice.] So hurried were all the arrangements immediately before the opening of the Exhibition, that one of the carpenters was actually nailed down beneath the flooring. He expostulated; but they answered that it would take more time than they could possibly spare to extricate him at present, and recommended patience. He would not be quieted, however, and misconducted himself by demanding vociferously to be let out during the opening ceremonial. A carpet dulled his cries; but they were of such a nature, that the orchestra had to strike up and drown them, while the Duke of Cambridge was in the very midst of a most impressive sentence. The unhappy man happened to be immured immediately beneath his Royal Highness's chair.'

'I remember to have heard a somewhat similar

* It is observable that an individual of this class never says 'A man I know'; all his acquaintances, he would have you to understand, are gentlemen.

anecdote,' remarked I drily, 'with respect to the theatre of New York, when it was being boarded over for the ball given to the Prince of Wales.'

'Ah indeed,' returned my companion, totally unabashed; 'that was then a curious case of coincidence. The doors are being opened. Look!'

There was a great inarticulate cry of admiration and delight, as the fountain dancing in the sunshine, and the long rainbow-roof of the Nave, shone out upon us, as though a gate had been opened in Paradise. The charity-school children then beheld a sight such as in their fathers' time no Monarch could have been able to witness. Asia, Africa, and America (for whose existence they had had as yet but the dubious evidence of their geography-books) were waiting within to welcome them. The richest jewels, the most costly dresses ever worn, were spread yonder for their approval; the finest paintings that Europe has produced for the last century were arranged in the best picture-gallery the World has yet seen, for their unbiassed criticism; while exquisite music, evoked from the most rare and various instruments, was ready to minister to their enchanted ears.

Under such circumstances, a barrier to progress was intolerable; and yet there was my experienced friend, who had visited the building so often before, stuck fast in a turnstile, having dropped his shilling into the wrong box. Its lucky recipient would not believe that he had any such surplus in his treasury, while the man who ought to have been paid was reasonably disinclined to be out of pocket by the transaction.

'But I have paid,' expostulated the wretched swell; 'I really have paid already.'

But it would not do.

My friend—alas—the crystal bar
Of Eden moves not. Will'er far
Than such wild words th' excuse must be,
That opes the gates of Heaven for these!

'You don't suppose,' observed the official scornfully, 'that I am going to make my turnstile wrong for you, do you?'

If the miserable obstructive had not instantly paid his second shilling, and so made way, I believe that the Duke of York's boys, accustomed as they were to military evolutions, would have cut a road for us through his body.

For half a minute the crowd stood knotted together around the golden pillar from Victoria—'I had no idea,' said one, 'that the nuggets were so large'—and then dispersed themselves about the building; not hastily, nor according to any preconceived plan, but exactly as water poured upon a dusty floor radiates slowly and almost reluctantly in all directions.

If the commissioners would have approved of it, I would cheerfully have mounted to the top of the bronze Parsee, and instructed my shilling-friends what course to pursue, after the following manner:

'When you have only a single day at the Exhibition' (I would have said), 'it is ridiculous for you to try to see everything, for in such an endeavour you will not only fail, but probably see the same things over and over again. Upon entering, as we have done, under the eastern dome, you should turn to your right, and walk round the north-east transept (without visiting its annexe), then cross by the fountain, and make a similar circuit of the south-eastern transept. Take the south side of the nave to the Western dome, and investigate the south-west and north-west transept (without visiting its annexe) in a similar manner: take the north side of the nave, and having completed it, sit down under its last (female) statue, and rest a bit, for you will have had by that time four hours of hard labour. The said statue is not to be found in the official catalogue (and you will

probably be too experienced by this time to expect to find it there), but it is a very charming one for all that—another California, perhaps you judge, from her cornucopia of gold, although a quite different conception from that exquisite one of Hiram Powers you have just been looking at.* This is a capital central resting-place, from whence it is but a step to the scented Majolica fountain, wherein you may dip your handkerchief without the slightest dread of its aroma being too powerful.

Seek once more the central avenue of the nave, and it will lead you, southward, to the staircase ascending to the British and Foreign galleries: explore the latter first—as you are probably acquainted with some of the contents of the other, or, at all events, will have opportunities of becoming so—taking one side in going, and the other in returning, and not attempting, as some do, to look at both sides at once. Accomplish the British galleries in the like manner, and then you will find yourself once more at the junction of both, opposite to which is a refreshment-room. The detail of these arduous though delightful duties is wearisome and exhausting even to read; how much more, then, after having practically accomplished them, oh! my holiday-friends, will you rejoice to sit down in the cool azure of these painted windows, and apply yourself to sherry-cobbler; or if this be too extravagant for you, there are second-class refreshment-rooms on the north side of the building, which would have a pleasant outlook into the Horticultural Gardens, if the enterprising proprietors thereof had not purposely put up an immense superfluous sail-cloth to obstruct your view. There is also no objection, I believe, to your bringing with you your own luncheon, and eating it in some secluded court, such as that of the Ionian Islands, which nobody comes to look at because there is a wax exhibition much superior to it to be seen in Holborn for the small charge of one penny, or indeed in any travelling caravan. The cheapest possible method of obtaining refreshments (I am informed by the *Times* newspaper) is, however, to walk into the French dining-room, order the most extravagant entertainment, and instead of paying for it, mention confidentially that you are a member of the British Press.

You have now perambulated the nave, both transepts, and the picture-galleries, which is about as much as ordinary legs and eyes can accomplish in one day. What you have seen has been merely glanced at, and the Courts, the Annexes, and the Galleries have not been seen at all: the tastes of my friends, too, I have supposed to be general, without speciality of any kind, and I have not therefore even shewn them the way to the Machinery, which would alone take them a day to properly investigate, and an unknown period to understand. Still, for the many thousands who will only have a single day at Brompton, I believe I have pointed out to them the most satisfactory, the simplest, and the least fatiguing method of seeing what is most worth seeing in the International Exhibition.

My friends of the first shilling-day were sadly in need of some general directions of this sort. Whoever possessed the strongest will (and biceps) carried the rest of his party along with him. One poor lady had an *enfant terrible* of a son with her, who dragged her about under his arms (as if she had been an encyclopaedia) to everything he did not understand—which was about nine-tenths of the catalogue—insisting upon an immediate explanation.

'Now, ma, what's this?' cried he. 'I must know all about it.'

He was referring, at the moment I chanced to overhear him, to the Dip Circle for determining the inclination of the Magnetic Needle; and I doubt,

* This statue, by Bell, has now a paper title: 'Forward, Australia.'

therefore, whether his laudable curiosity was gratified. Another young gentleman, with no such thirst for detail, returned to some inquiring friends with the information that the model of Milan was that of Italy—the name of that country having been legibly inscribed beneath it.

The Armstrong gun, so polished, yet so formidable, that had been fired nineteen times in a minute, attracted us all: we patted it, we stroked it, we treated it as a trusty friend, although a new one, who would keep all foreigners from us save those who came as rivals only in the arts of peace.

The French billiard-tables without pockets astonished us beyond expression.

'Would you like to see the Piping Bullfinch,' observed I, to a panting agriculturist, whose endeavours to restrain his juvenile family from wandering too far reminded me of a hen with chickens.

'The Piping Bullfinch! ah,' said he, wiping his forehead, 'I should rather think I should—if they sell beer there.' He thought it was a public-house. But how those children did enjoy that bird! they screamed as shrilly as the jewelled creature itself; they clapped their tiny hands as he clapped his wings; and when he retired into his little box with a snap, I thought they would have gone out of their minds. I was afterwards weak enough to take these young people to see the bank of Kentish wild-flowers in wax, with which they were by no means so well satisfied, but paid it the unintentioned compliment of saying, that there were plenty such banks as that in the copse at the bottom of their meadow at home. In reparation for causing them this disappointment, I requested permission to treat each of the party to an ice, a substance to them unknown as used for food. The juveniles, commencing upon this with trepidation, soon got to snatch a fearful joy from it; but Paterfamilias (who nevertheless thought it his duty to go through with his share), complained of 'shooting pains between the blade-bones,' and presently 'all down his shin-bones into his feet!' The jury on Human Food and its Effects ought certainly to receive the evidence of this gentleman, as being probably in a much more normal condition than any of their body.

The picture-galleries were not patronised to the degree expected of my shilling-friends, and as it was, the visit, through being too prolonged, produced in many cases a sort of vertigo. 'I can't look any more,' exclaimed one poor lady whom an æsthetic daughter had carried along with her over many square miles of colour; 'I really can't; my head's a-going round.' I fancy that many exhausted persons were attracted hither by the exceptional comfort of the seats; to obtain rest, and at the same time to continue sight-seeing, being an advantage scarcely to be over-estimated. The temptation, however, to take a fuller advantage of the occasion was sometimes too great to be resisted, and I observed (not in the same party) no less than three ladies and two gentlemen, each planted accurately opposite to some deathless work of genius, but all—asleep!

Towards the latter part of the day, the physical energies of most of us began to fail, and especially of those with juveniles, who now had to be dragged behind, in compensation for having well-nigh pulled their parents' arms off at an earlier stage of the proceedings. Even the professional visitors to the machinery department—some of whom were never out of it—began to look as if their day's work was nearly over, and to listen for the bell that should proclaim the Mill was closing.

One thing only had now power to give us a fillip, and no matter how prostrated it found us, we always answered to its spur. As soon as the Japanese ambassadors, or members of their suite, made themselves visible in any part of the building, there was a perfect stampede to follow them. Fathers seized an offspring in either hand, and gave the word to their

detachment to charge; mothers with flying bonnet-strings and babies flattened to their bosoms obeyed the call; mothers-in-law, with their beloved umbrellas clutched like a banner in their right hands, followed in hot haste; and the big boy of the party, who had impeded its movements the whole day long, and tripped up other people by perpetually kneeling down to tie his shoe, was caught in that defenceless position by the tumultuous throng, and most retributively knocked over. The distinguished foreigners were hunted round and round the place by three classes of persons; the first wave comprised the general visitors, the second the pickpockets, and the third the police. The *Times* complains that these unhappy plenipotentiaries of the Tycoon do not stay to investigate, but merely take general views of the objects of interest. But how can gentlemen be expected to do otherwise, whose only safety from the feet of the British public lies in keeping up a trot of at least five miles an hour, and that, too, while encumbered by two swords and an umbrella apiece—like Robinson Crusoe!

AMERICAN PRACTICE.

'THERE's a chance for you, doctor!' said Captain Acland very good-naturedly.

The words were spoken on the poop of the *Fair Imogen*, of and from Liverpool, in the harbour of Alatomaha Sound, Georgia, U. S., on a sweltering summer's day. We were standing together beside the wheel, we three, as great a contrast to one another in appearance and manner as is often presented by any trio living. There was the captain, short, bluff, and broad, the very model of a British seaman, with his brick-red cheek, and the frank but keen blue eye, that had seen its way through so much of dirty weather and awkward work. There was Mr Millett, the rich landowner who wanted my services, a tall, thin, dignified personage enough, with a handsome and intellectual set of features, rather too finely cut, perhaps, and marred by an irresolute expression about the mouth. There was myself, a young doctor, very poor, and very shabby, but blessed with excellent health and spirits, and a robust constitution. Two words will explain how I came to be surgeon of the *Fair Imogen*, and why it was so good-natured of her commander to speak as he did with reference to Mr Millett's proposition. I had a real taste for my profession, and had passed my examinations with tolerable credit, but, in an evil hour, I was cajoled into investing what little money I possessed, all that my poor father could leave me, in the purchase of an 'eligible practice.' The practice was guaranteed, on the solemn assurance of a most venerable and plausible member of our healing art, to be worth five hundred a year. It may have been thus profitable to himself; since I afterwards understood that he had traded in it successfully for four or five years, constantly parting with it to novices, and buying it back for an old song, in person or by proxy, when the novices were disgusted; but the venture ruined me, and I went out to America, hoping to retrieve my fortunes. As yet I had not found the New World an El Dorado, and I had been thankful when Captain Acland, whose son had been a schoolfellow of mine in Westmoreland, our native county, had engaged my services as surgeon of the brig. The *Fair Imogen* was a vessel of but moderate tonnage, or she could not have got into the anchorage of Alatomaha Sound, and craft of her size seldom carry a doctor. But she was employed in very unhealthy climates, chiefly coasting the shores of the Mexican Gulf, and plying among the West India Islands; and, as salary was easily arranged in my case, the captain and I had soon come to an arrangement. Still, it was good-natured of Captain Acland to be ready to release me from my bargain the moment a brighter prospect seemed to open before me. I did

not say much—we Englishmen are awkward in such matters—but my eyes filled as I caught the old seaman's hand and gave it a grateful squeeze.

'Tell you what,' said the captain; 'the best thing you can do, Mr Ellis, is to run down below, and pack your traps, jump into this gentleman's canoe, and go ashore with him. It shan't be said that John Acland stood in any chap's light, least of all a schoolmate of his son's; and so God bless you, lad, and if ever you want a free passage home to England, why, the *Fair Imogen* is heartily at your service.'

I went on shore. My 'traps,' as the kind old skipper had called them, were not very weighty: a medicine-chest, two or three instrument-cases, a port-manteau, and hatbox, made up the sum of my effects; and the negro boatmen grinned rather contemptuously as they handed these modest belongings in and out of the canoe. But I will say for Mr Millett that his bearing was perfectly polite, and free from patronage, although I was a mere aspirant, with forty dollars for my entire capital, and he one of the richest proprietors in his county. 'I take on myself to say, sir, you will not repent of your decision,' said my new client in his grave sententious way, as the canoe danced over the little blue waves, and as I waved my straw-hat in return for the farewell wave of good Captain Acland's cap: 'you will find, sir, that talent is not unrecognised, nor merit unrewarded, in the South—no, sir. And I venture to affirm, Mr Ellis, that you will enjoy the peaceful pleasures of a home at Briary Bush, and'—

'Hilloah! whoop! Colonel Millett! I've been riding up the creek-side in hopes I'd happen in upon you. I want to know if you'll trade for right-down useful workers. My overseer says that patch by Hemlock Knoll is clean wore out, and I'm over-niggered!' cried a loud and sonorous voice; and looking round, I saw that we were close to the quay, and that a horseman had reined in his strong bay mare close to the weed-incrusted steps. He was a tall young man, with long dark hair, and the air of a provincial rake; his clothes were of good cut and material, and he had lackered boots and a great deal of jewellery, contrasting oddly with a palm-leaf hat and a heavy slashing whip of twisted cowhide.

'You know, Mr Cook, I leave these matters to my overseer,' said Colonel, or Mr Millett in reply, and with a dryness in his tone which shewed anything but pleasure in the conversation, or affection for the person addressed. Mr Cook, whose dark face was overclouded in a moment, ground out an oath between his teeth, and struck his mare so as to make her plunge and rear.

'Hang it, Jeff Millett, but you needn't be so stiff and pokerish with a man,' grumbled he in a half-fierce half-disconsolate tone: 'our fathers were friends, I reckon, though you never speak to me except in that infernal keep-your-distance manner you learned in Europe. If you were in trouble, now, I'd behave differently to your way of doing it.'

By this time we were on the quay, the luggage handed out, the canoe-men paid, and a cart driven by a negro, as well as two saddle-horses, led by a mounted mulatto groom, was approaching. Mr Millett shook his head reproachfully. 'Yours is a short memory, Mr Cook,' said he; 'you have appealed to my old intimacy with your father more than once, and not in vain, as you know. But I am afraid no aid that a neighbour can extend will ever be enough to—' However, I have no right to preach—you are old enough to be your own monitor. If you like to dine with us to-morrow'—

'Smart as a snapping turtle! I'm your man,' interrupted Cook, with a more gleeful air. 'I know my way pretty well to Briary Bush. But I say, colonel, how's Miss Cary?'

'My daughter is as usual, I thank you,' said my host very coldly, and as if annoyed at the familiar mention of his child's name from those lips. 'This

sultry season has been a trying one to all invalids. Does your mother bear it well?'

Mr Cook rejoined with amiable frankness, that 'he would be scalped if he knew. He hadn't been over to Darien-town these two months;' and we parted. This young man had not inquired who I was, or whether I were bound or not for Mr Millett's house, but he had eyed me over with undisguised curiosity, not unmixed with scorn; and it struck me that as he nodded in farewell to my companion, he bestowed on me a scowl that indicated anything but approval or sympathy.

We were mounted by this time, Mr Millett on his favourite chestnut hack, and I on a Virginia-bred brown horse; while the coloured groom, who was simply clad in black broadcloth, as republican principles demand, jumped upon his piebald pony. It is taken for granted in America that everybody can ride; first-rate horsemen, except among the Southern land-owners and the prairie settlers, are rare, but most of those who dwell in the country can sit a quiet horse. Either the brown nag from Briary Bush was *not* a quiet horse, or he had been chafed by the delay, for, before I was settled in the saddle, he began to caper and curvet, and finally to bolt forward like a cannon-ball ejected from its deadly tube. 'Mr Ellis, hold him tight, sir! pray, sir, do!' cried Mr Millett in his high shrill voice. I heard his good advice, but like some other good advice, it was easier to give than to take. For a hundred yards or so, I could as easily have checked a railway train as have curbed the rush of the fiery brute. Then, to be sure, I got him in hand, mastered him somehow, and rode back rejoicing.

'Very good, Mr Ellis,' said my—what shall I call him, client? or employer?—'I congratulate you on getting the better of Brown Rupert, always a fidgety beast with a strange rider. Thrasybulus, you inattentive cur, this is your fault, for not bringing out the old gray as I bade you.' And the master shook his gold-headed whip, half-angrily, half-playfully at the groom.

'Not my fault, sir, mas'r, not 'Sybulus's fault at all. Dat tupid black chap, de coachman Aaron, he say: "Ole gray top at home, take physic; too much gallop last Monday. 'Sybulus take Rupert to fesh Britisher." So you see, Mas'r Colonel'—

'There, that will do,' said the master; and we rode on amid the rice-swamps, where the ripe grain was all but ready for the sickle of the mower, where the sun blazed on the pools and runlets of water, making them shine like burnished silver, and where the leaves of the palmettoes drooped, hot and dusty, in the still air. Rice, rice, rice, nothing but rice, until we turned away from the river, away from the lagoons, where the weeds grew rank, and the alligators lay like slimy brown logs, and attracted as little notice, and rode up a well-kept way which skirted a little creek of clear and deep water. The banks were thickly fringed with bushes and wild sugar-cane, and great gaudy flowers peeped out from among the yellowing shrubs. Presently we came to a spot where the hedgeside trees had been 'blazed' with an axe, and the raw wood smeared over with blue paint; and my companion turned to me with a grave gentle smile, and bade me 'welcome to Briary Bush Estate.' A fine estate it was, not running to ruin, weedy and exhausted, and gradually encroached upon by the brushwood and scrub, as so often happens in that semi-tropical climate, but beautifully cultivated, and teeming with sugar, indigo, and tobacco.

After a while we came in sight of the house, a heavy, but very spacious pile, built partly of wood and partly of white stone, much stained and decayed by the damp climate. The mansion, however, was in perfect repair; and with its balconies, its sun-blinds and shade-trees, and the creepers that were trained like fragrant draperies

over its cool verandahs, it had an air of comfort and repose. The garden was large, and unusually well kept. 'Let me introduce you,' said Mr Millett, as he ushered me into a large and cool apartment, the floor of which was covered with a delicate kind of white matting: 'Mrs Millett—my daughter, Miss Caroline—Mr Alfred Ellis.'

It was some time before my eyes, fresh from the glare of daylight, could pierce the gloom of that darkened drawing-room sufficiently to make out the faces and figures of the two ladies to whom my name had been mentioned. Then I could distinguish that Mrs Millett was a very languid, affected-looking person, dressed in the style recommended by the *Follet* of three months ago, and reclining on a sofa, over which a mosquito-curtain had been artfully suspended. The daughter was a pale, delicate girl of about sixteen, with a regular, almost Grecian set of features, and was simply attired in plain white muslin, straining her eyes over a book. At her I looked with more interest than at her lady-mother, for it was on her account that I was to be domiciled for a while at Briary Bush. Caroline Millett was of a very frail constitution, even judging by an American standard; and had she been an only child, she could not have been more tenderly loved or fondly cared for. There were but two children, indeed, to inherit Mr Millett's very handsome property, and he had never made any secret of his intention to divide the inheritance equally between Washington, his only son, and his sister Caroline. This was enough to attract a swarm of suitors, more or less actuated by mercenary motives, to Briary Bush; and as, in the South, marriages take place almost as early as in the corresponding latitudes of the Old World, Mr Millett could easily have found a dozen eligible husbands for his heiress. Caroline was young, however, and her extreme delicacy of health rendered her parents unwilling to part with her. Her father, in especial, was more and more anxious about her as she grew up, like a flower, indeed, but a colourless and drooping one. It was his idea that the poor girl, often ailing, and always feeble, would benefit by the presence of a doctor in the house, and hence he had resolved on engaging the exclusive services of a resident medical adviser. There was no lack of doctors in Georgia; but too many of them were either impudent quacks, the refuse of northern cities, or whisky-drinking ruffians, who had forgotten the major part of the little lore Philadelphia or Boston had taught them. Mr Millett had a prejudice in favour of European science and steadiness; and a cure or two which I had the good-fortune to perform while the brig lay in harbour, and when my skill, such as it was, was in frequent demand among the settlers on that unhealthy coast, had come to his ears. The large salary he offered was a temptation not easily to be resisted. Captain Acland waived his claims; and thus it was that I became a member of the Briary Bush household.

I found Mrs Millett a selfish fine lady, a transatlantic copy of the fine ladies she had probably associated with in Paris and Florence. She was polite to me, in a chilly way, but she kept me at an awful distance, never suffering me to forget that I was the plebeian young doctor, *she*, the leader of a section among the Upper Ten Thousand. Mrs Millett was not heartless, though, after all, for she respected her husband, loved Caroline, and idolised her son. This son was away—at West Point, indeed, where he was qualifying at the military school for a commission in the army of the then United States—but he was very shortly expected home for a brief sojourn.

Caroline was a clever, well-dispositioned girl, with that inordinate love for study which often belongs to those whose lives are not destined to last long in the world. Her large blue eyes had an almost startling look of inquiry; she seldom spoke except to ask a question, and her taste for reading was such as to

surprise me, who had not been much used to such patients. In vain did her mother chide, in vain did Mr Millett remonstrate in his mild way; a book, of one kind or another, was hardly out of Caroline's hand. She was very pale, slight, and fragile; her hands were as white as if they had been modelled in alabaster, and very thin and slender too; her cheek was all but colourless, and there were dark circles round her fine eyes.

She was fair; she looked almost beautiful, now and then, as when I had persuaded her to read me a portion of Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, or when she allowed her spirited pony to gallop under the arching boughs of the forest, in one of the rides which she sometimes took with her father and myself. Then, indeed, a flush of healthy colour would glow in her wan cheek, and her eyes would shine, and her drooping form dilate into genial promise: she was like one transfigured for the time. I did not commit the folly of falling in love with my patient. To me, Caroline Millett was merely something to be studied, to be saved, to be snatched back from the jaws of the grave, if human skill and care could do it. That her frail thread of life was wearing out day by day, very gradually and certainly, was undoubted; I could see it, small as my experience had been in the ailments of the youthful of her sex. Mr Millett, a most affectionate father, could see it too, and it wrung his heart cruelly at times, as his eye dwelt upon her with a yearning and an apprehension in it that he vainly strove to hide. I did what I could, I gave much care and forethought to the case; and there were moments when I thought I—or nature and youth, rather—must prove victorious over the unnatural progress of the decline. I prescribed remedies from the pharmacopœia, not with much reliance that drugs could meet the exigencies of such a case, but because I felt it my duty to leave nothing untried. Meanwhile, exercise, regimen, the cheerful society of persons of her own age, were what I recommended for Caroline, and Mr Millett hastened to comply.

The pony was now in continual requisition, and we rode almost every day. There were parties given in pursuance of my advice; Briary Bush opened its doors, again and again, to the notables of the county, and then followed a shoal of invitations in return, so that the round of gaiety was continuous. In this I had had a design beyond the ostensible one of amusing the lonely heiress. Little as I knew of women, I had conjectured that a hopeless attachment might be at the root of the mischief. Caroline was very young, certainly, but sixteen in Georgia is often reckoned as a marriageable age; Miss Millett *might* have bestowed her heart on some one of whom her parents did not or would not approve, and hence her illness. But in vain did I watch Caroline at every fresh dance or dinner, beset, as she generally was, by numbers of admirers, anxious to win favour with the well-dowered daughter of Colonel Millett. Her eye did not brighten or sink abashed, her cheek did not blush, as the young dandies of the state paid her their interested adoration, and she was evidently so perfectly fancy-free that I was obliged to give up my hypothesis. But if she distinguished none by any preference, she had certainly an aversion to one person, in which I cordially agreed with her: this person was Mr Cook, the young man whom I had seen on first landing from the brig, and who had dined at Briary Bush on the following day. His dilapidated estate lay within four or five miles of the thriving lands of my entertainer, whose next heir-at-law he would be, although but a distant cousin, should Mr Millett survive his two children. Louis Cook had received many services, and much good advice, from his kinsman; and he had accepted the former, and spurned the latter, after the habitual custom of spendthrifts. He was, unless report lied, more than a spendthrift, a calculating, unscrupulous gambler and profligate, unfavourably

known as the associate of the worst scamps in Savannah and New Orleans. He was now all but ruined, his land exhausted by careless and reckless culture, his best slaves sold away, and his house dropping piecemeal to decay.

The chief hope of Louis Cook was now to marry the rich heiress of his remote cousin, or at least such had been his chief hope till very lately. But the undisguised dislike which Caroline manifested for his person and conversation, had gradually convinced him that his suit would be useless. It was not without some difficulty that this conviction forced itself on the dull, coarse mind of the young man, bucklered as it was by self-conceit, but at last he felt it, and it stung him. It was at a party at a neighbouring mansion, where Caroline had declined to dance, that she might be free from a half-extorted engagement to waltz with him, that I first saw Cook reddened and scowl, and marked the evil look he cast towards her as he turned on his heel. After that, I more than once noted his eye bent upon the unconscious girl, with a stealthy malignity in it that there was no mistaking. But to Mr and Mrs Millett he was always civil and deferential; he subdued the outer signs of his bad nature, that his wealthy relative might regard him with approval, and affected extreme gratitude for the obligations under which my host had laid him. The cause of my own dislike to Cook was an innate, instinctive antipathy. He was flippant and overbearing in his manner towards myself, but so were several of the more rough and dissolute planters, proud of their pedigree and their possessions. It was not on this account that I felt repelled from Louis Cook, or that I distrusted him, nor could I have given a satisfactory reason for the impression he produced upon me. When I had been two months at Briary Bush, the young heir and hope of the house, Washington Millett, came home. He had been expected before, but something had delayed the granting of his leave of absence, and now he had passed his final examination at West Point, and had returned to the parental roof to await his commission. This would no doubt be assigned to him in a short time, and would most probably be in the scientific arm of the service, since all agreed that Washington Millett was a most promising cadet, and a credit to West Point. He was a fine gentlemanly lad, very like his sister in features, but much more vigorous and full of healthy life. Still, he was of a slight make and nervous temperament, and I wondered that he had not suffered more than he had done from the lengthened and severe studies which he had gone through. It was on the evening of the day which preceded the young heir's return home, that a somewhat singular circumstance occurred.

I had been taking a stroll through the twilight forest, alone, partly for the sake of collecting moths and other nocturnal insects, which leave their haunts as the shades of night fall upon the woodlands of that southern latitude, when I missed my way. Although not much given to musing, I had somehow fallen into a reverie, and my mind was far away among the green English meadows and leafy English orchards. Suddenly I stopped and started, as the melancholy cry of the 'Willy-come-go bird' sounded plaintively from a live oak on my right hand. I looked round me, and saw that I had strayed from the path, and that I was in a small clearing which I had never before seen, and where the low mounds that rose like earthen billows above the soil proclaimed it an Indian burial-place. Several great trees must have been cut down, and their very roots burned away by fire, but this was long ago. The tribe that had laid its dead there was gone utterly and for ever. No hand had stirred the soil for many a year, and the grass grew thick and long there. Ringing this desolate space was a belt of dark cypresses and swamp myrtles, with the long gray beards of the Spanish moss drooping in wild

luxuriance from every bough. There were some dense thickets, too, where the laurel, the hickory, the peavine, and the wild grape-vine grew and interlaced their tough stems and tendrils, and among the branches I caught the gleam of a thousand fairy lamps, those of the fire-fly and fire-beetle. A more dreary spot I never saw; and yet there were people there, talking together in stealthy, cautious tones.

'Hist!' said a voice that jarred unpleasantly on my ear—'hist! didn't you hear something?'

'No,' answered a second voice, in harsh but impressive accents, which might have been those of either a woman or a man, but which, once heard, were not easily forgotten. 'No; massa fancy him hear. Massa hear him own heart beat, p'rape. Ole Zanna hear nothing, but then Zanna not 'fraid.'

'Curse you, you old ebony-coloured hag, do you dare to say I am afraid, then?' was the fierce rejoinder, spoken in loud, incantatory tones, and I heard the speaker stamp his heavy foot upon the rotten twigs that lay beneath his tread. The old woman laughed, not with any pleasant merriment, but with a shrill witchlike cackling, that sounded weird and awful in that lonely place.

'Ha! ha!' she said in a slow, chuckling tone, 'de fine buckra gentleman must not be angry with poor ole black woman. Zanna larf to think Massa Louis fancy some one here after dark—here, where de slaves sooner cut off 'um hand, and put stump in de fire, than dare to come—here, where de red warrior keep guard over um grave—here, where fetch live in Obi hut, and black man tremble when he think of Burnt Clearing.'

'Well, well, aunt; may be you're right; and the place is lonesome enough,' returned the male speaker, with a slight shudder; 'but so much the better for talk like ours. After all, aunt, you're not the wise woman you pretend to be, or why could you not conquer the silly whims of that puling, yellow-haired girl? Had she married me, as the first scheme was, I'd have been content with half the estate, and taken my chance that young Washington would have been polished off by Indians, or fever on the frontiers, to get the rest.'

'Zanna can do much, not all,' answered the old negress, for although I could catch no glimpse of the speakers, sheltered as they were by the huge bole of a hoary cypress-tree, I could have no doubt of the age and colour of the latter. 'Zanna try. Spirit fight, and Zanna lose. Young missis hate you, for all you such fine, handsome gentleman, Massa Louis. So best let her die out of way.'

I felt my blood run cold. Eavesdropping is not to my taste, but now I would have given the world to hear more; this, however, was not to be. The pair of conspirators, for such they evidently were, moved away from under the cypress, and walked slowly through the thickets, till the sound of their voices died away in indistinct murmuring. My brain was in a whirl. That some dastardly and wicked plot, menacing the life of my patient, Caroline Millett, if not of her brother also, was in progress, I could not doubt. I had recognised the voice of Mr Cook, albeit it had a new and strange intensity of tone, due to excitement, and besides, the negress had twice called him 'Massa Louis.' The reasons which should make Louis Cook, a ruined and unscrupulous profligate, desirous of the death of those who stood between himself and the inheritance of Briary Bush estate, were plain enough. But I hesitated to believe that this man, reckless as he was, could be a villain of a sufficiently black dye to compass the destruction of two unoffending young persons, in the very bloom of life and promise, for mere lucre. Rather than believe Cook guilty of such atrocious perfidy as this, I began to question whether my senses had not been at fault, or whether my fancy had not quickened my hearing. As I stood musing thus, a

quick step was heard approaching, and a tall man sprang out from under the shade of the forest, and crossed the clearing. The broad southern moon was now risen in the cloudless heavens, and under the shadow of the wide-leaved Panama hat he wore, I recognised the dark, striking lineaments of Cook. He was muttering to himself as he hurried on. He could not see me, standing as I did at the foot of the mighty ever-green oak, whose boughs made a canopy overhead; and as he passed, I saw him clench his fist, and heard him growl forth: 'Ay, old beldam, trust in me, when I am the heir of Briary Bush—trust in me to reward you as you deserve, if there's virtue in a Colt's rifle and a round bit of lead. You know too much, old witch.'

In a moment he was gone, but I heard the dead branches on the ground crack under his tread. I was curious, when I entered the lighted drawing-room of the mansion an hour later, to find Cook there, talking glibly to Mrs Millett, while Caroline sat at the piano, playing a sad, sweet little air that was a great favourite of hers. I thought that Cook was ill at ease: his conversation was voluble, but he evidently forced himself to talk and laugh; and he gave me a keen suspicious glance when I said, in answer to Mr Millett's inquiry, that I had been walking, and had lost my way. I suppose I kept my countenance well, for it was with a sigh of relief that he turned away to converse with the master of the house. The next day, I slipped out soon after breakfast, and made my way into the woods, of no great extent, but gloomy and intricate, which belted in the cultivated fields of the plantation. With some trouble, I found the spot which the old negress had called 'Burnt Clearing.' Yes, there it was, with its open space, its grassy mounds, and the heavy cypress-grove beyond. In this grove, on a rising knoll which commanded a view of the clearing, I found a small hut, roofed with bark, and of the most neglected appearance. There was nothing about the look of this wretched dwelling to indicate that it was anything more than the occasional abode of a wood-cutter, now shut up and dismantled; but I remembered the words of the old negress, and I could not help connecting this building with the plot of whose fell purport I had now an inkling. I tried the door; it opened freely. For a moment, I stood on the threshold irresolute, for I beheld looming through the darkness of an inner recess something like a human form. I was on the point of addressing the supposed occupant of the shanty, when my eyes, now more accustomed to the dim light, perceived that it was a mere effigy on which I looked. I removed a sheet of bark, which served as shutter to the unglazed window, and beheld a sight which transported me, in fancy, to the mangrove swamps and savage kingdoms of the Guinea coast.

Seated on a kind of throne carved out of the roots of some gnarled old tree, was a ghastly figure, of man's stature, artfully compounded of feathers, bones, scraps of coloured rag, and all those quaint fragments which go to make up a 'fetich' among the rudest idolaters of the coast. The grisly idol's head was represented by a human skull, smeared with fresh blood, that had not yet had time to become wholly dry—blood that, however, was no doubt derived from some newly killed fowls that lay, like a sacrifice, in front of the seat. Around the idol's neck were strips of red cloth, peacocks' feathers, brass buttons, beads, shells, and several barbaric ornaments of brass or pewter, probably brought from Africa on the limbs of long since imported Blacks. It was an ugly, absurd thing, and I eyed it with disgust. There rushed upon my mind all the strange stories I had heard of heathen rites carried on in secluded spots among the plantations of the South. I had been assured that many negroes cherished a superstitious belief in the old pagan worship of the ancestral continent, that

wherever an Obi man or woman existed, the credulous people were the dupes of the pretended witch or conjurer, and that blacks who were zealous church-goers would steal out under cover of night to be present at hideous ceremonies performed by some crafty barbarian from Africa.

Such an Obi woman I naturally concluded this Zanna, the confederate of Louis Cook, to be. My only wonder was that I had never heard of her before. I had often gone with the master or the overseer among the quarters of the field-hands; I had seen and spoken with most of the numerous domestics employed about the house, but I could remember nobody who answered to the description which my fancy painted of the unseen accomplice of Mr Millett's kinsman. However, I now resolved to pursue my investigation of the contents of the hut. I found several skulls, some of oxen, others of human beings, both children and adults. There were the dried bodies of snakes, too, and a great quantity of herbs, with some pipkins and pitchers, some bottles, and a great caldron. Most of the bottles were empty, but others contained liquids, some thick and muddy, others clear and colourless. I shuddered as I looked at them, remembering as I did the tales of murders done by poison on the coast of Africa, where the life of no one was safe who had an enemy rich enough to bribe the fetichman of the village. Perhaps those decoctions, made from plants that I knew not, had the power of pouring death into the lifeblood of those who tasted, and Caroline and her brother were to be cut off thus. And yet how, I argued, could the Obi woman contrive to drug the food of those who dwelt in a secure mansion, full of servants, and where the stealthiest intruder could not hope to escape detection? Soberly puzzled, and half inclined to consider my vision of the night before as a distempered dream, I went slowly back to the house. Young Washington Millett had just arrived, and I withdrew, not to intrude on the glad meeting between those so near and dear to each other, after long absence. Presently I returned, and made the acquaintance of the young heir, whose frank and genial bearing pleased me much. I could hardly believe that one so happy and gay of mood could really have been marked for destruction by a concealed and cowardly foe.

My proper course in the matter was a problem. I could hardly go to Mr Millett with a tale so extraordinary and improbable; I could hardly accuse his relative, the man who constantly sat at his table and grasped his hand in friendship, of such black villainy, on the strength of a conversation overheard in a wood between Cook and an unseen person; Mr Millett was almost sure to class my revelation as either a dream or a wicked and malicious invention. And yet, could I stand by and be a passive spectator of mischief so deliberate and cruel! From this reverie I was awakened by a great noise of laughing, crying, and vociferation. The household, which almost wholly consisted of negro men and women born and bred under Mr Millett's roof, had gathered round their young master on his quitting the presence of his parents and sister, and bade fair to tear him to pieces in their eagerness to be recalled to memory.

'Mas'r member me—Juba dat allays carry um gun?' cried one black lad.

'Mas'r Washington, you not know me, sar! Me little Polly dat you gave de sugar-plums to before you go north,' exclaimed a sable child, now grown out of knowledge.

'Young master not forgot um old nurse!' said a fat, good-humoured creature, fairly blubbing as her former charge greeted her with familiar affection.

'Mas'r remember Sophy—de cook! Sophy dat make de puddings and pies, and gumbo soup mas'r likes, and stewed terrapins so bootiful?' cried that important functionary, her sable face glowing with grease and delight.

'I recollect you all. I've often thought of you when I was far away; and I'm right glad to see your honest faces, old and young, my friends,' said Washington, very heartily. He was kind to them all, and they all seemed to feel proud and fond of him; and I looked down with amusement and satisfaction from my place at the stair-head, when I suddenly heard the young man inquire for 'Aunt Anne.' It is usual to call all black matrons by this family title, and already had Washington shaken hands with a dozen aunts among the crowd; but when 'Aunt Anne' was mentioned, a sort of chill seemed to fall on the hearers.

'Not dead, is she?' asked Washington. 'No; I see by your faces she is not. Is she as great a favourite with my sister, Miss Caroline, as ever?'

'Iss, Massa Washington,' replied the servants; but it was with bated breath and a subdued demeanour. Their eyes no longer rolled in childish glee, their white teeth no longer shone forth in happy smiles; for some reason or other, the name of 'Aunt Anne' had made them all grave as judges. Washington took no notice of this, but nodded gaily, and ran lightly upstairs, and the assembly broke up. I, too, walked away, with fresh food for thought. Who was this Aunt Anne, this strange invisible crone, whose name was like a dash of cold water on the exuberant spirits of her merry thoughtless race? I had never heard of her before, and yet it seemed she was a favourite of Caroline's. She could be no ordinary person, to judge by the awe which she evidently inspired among the coloured folks; and I bethought me that it might be by her agency that Zanna, the Obi woman, counted on getting access to Caroline's presence for the furtherance of her fatal designs. Resolved to clear this up, I went to the library, where I found Caroline alone, poring over the contents of a box of new books, fresh from Europe. The unsuspecting girl readily answered my questions. 'Who was Aunt Anne? Oh, the dearest old thing. She belonged once to Mr Cook, papa's cousin, you know, the father of Mr Louis, and was sold away at his death. She is a sort of housekeeper at Briary Bush, wonderfully clever for a negress. All the other servants are afraid of her, and treat her as if she were a princess. She can do surprising cures, when any of the people are bitten by snakes, or catch ague in the swamps.'

'Indeed,' said I. 'Then she is probably much attached to the family?'

Caroline said: 'Yes, she was. So fond and thoughtful. But you'd never believe it, Mr Ellis; when they first brought her from Africa, she was quite wild and dangerous; at least so I have heard, though now she goes to meeting regularly.'

'Ah, she is an Africa-born black, then,' said I, more and more interested. 'I have heard that they usually acquire great influence over your creole servants. But there is no slave-trade now with the States.'

Caroline said that Aunt Anne had been forty years in America. She was quite an old woman. Her two sons had been mere babies when she was brought from the coast to Savannah slave-mart, and she had not been separated from them—more lucky than many poor creatures. I asked if they were on the estate. 'No,' said Caroline sadly; 'they both turned out very badly. They were not good men, though papa was very indulgent to them. They were forgiven again and again, until they were obliged to be punished. Then one of them ran away, and lived wild in the woods, and was hunted with dogs, and shot. O dear, it was shocking and sad; but they said he set such a bad example to the field-hands.'

'And the other?' persisted I.

The other, Caroline said, had committed many offences, and had been at last 'sold south' to a Louisiana planter, and was carried away in chains. 'We pitied poor Aunt Anne so, but she never

shed a tear, poor thing. She is a very remarkable woman.'

'So I should think,' said I; 'I should like very much to see her.'

Caroline laughed, and said she 'would introduce me some day.' She could not, of course, divine my reasons for coveting the interview I sought with the clever housekeeper. But next morning at the breakfast-table, I found Mrs Millett peevish, and Washington and his father sad and serious. I soon learned the cause: Caroline was very ill, and unable to leave her bed. 'My dear Mr Ellis, how pale you look,' exclaimed my entertainer, as this sudden announcement blanched my cheek. He little guessed what a ghastly fear had come upon me, as I thought of the conversation I had overheard. I was presently called to the bedside of my patient. She was very pale and weak, and her eyes were dim and sunken, but she was not, as far as I could see, in any immediate danger. The symptoms were those of low fever. Her maid, a comely brown lass, was sobbing in the dressing-room; but the most prominent figure in the room was Aunt Anne, a little withered negress, with snow-white hair, the wrinkled face of a baboon, and eyes as bright and lively as glow-worms in the dark; she was bustling actively, yet noiselessly, to and fro among physic bottles and cordials, here adjusting a pillow, there drawing a curtain, evidently an invaluable nurse in any sick-room. Mrs Millett spoke to her. She answered, Oh, that harsh, strong voice; however subdued, it was not to be forgotten—the voice of the she-plotter in the cypress-grove, the voice of the Obi woman, Zanna's voice. Zanna—Aunt Anne—pshaw! what a dolt I was not to have noticed the similarity before. Yes, there could not be a doubt that the cruel witch, the black murderess, was before me, Caroline's trusted attendant, watchful at Caroline's sick-bed as a snake that waits to strike its prey.

I hastily wrote a prescription, and left the room. I am sure that Mrs Millett, now fairly aroused by a sense of her child's danger, thought me very rude and negligent. My thoughts seemed, in that emergency, to be clearer than was commonly the case. To go to Mr Millett, with his timorous reticences and weak but elegant nature, I felt to be useless; I therefore went straight to young Washington Millett, and without circumlocution, told him all I knew and all I feared. He was greatly shocked and startled; his sister's peril distressed him deeply, but he shewed a good sense and self-command beyond his years. 'I have heard of these Obi wizards before, Mr Ellis,' said he, 'though such matters are generally hushed up among the planters. I never expected, I own, to find such treachery under my father's roof. He has been so kind to the blacks; foolishly kind, some think. But that woman's wretched sons were severely dealt with by the Vigilance Committee, who took their chastisement quite out of my father's hands. What do you think she meant by her mysterious allusions to her own efforts to make poor Cary in love with that scoundrel Cook, and the resistance of Cary's spirit?'

'I have heard,' answered I dubiously, 'that those Obi people can gain great authority over the wills of others, especially of the young and feeble, by whispering in the ear of their victims during sleep.'

Young Millett interrupted me with a stamp and a fierce exclamation.

'By Heaven, Mr Ellis,' he cried, 'I could believe that old hag had been beside my pillow last night. What else could have put into my head—mine—the infernal thought—ah! I may confess it to you, Mr Ellis—the idea of robbing my father?'

'Of robbing your father?' I began to fear the young man's excitement had affected his brain.

Washington went on, more calmly: 'Yes; it must have been her counsel, or that of the Fiend in person.

Who else could have murmured in my sleeping ear that there were nineteen thousand dollars in the tortoise-shell cabinet in my father's dressing-room? Who else could have told me the drawer in which they were locked, and have urged on me, not only to rob, but to conceal the plunder in a spot minutely indicated?

'Ah,' said I, 'what spot?'

'A hollow cypress-tree,' answered Washington, 'close to a desolate opening in the woods called Burnt Clearing. I have not been there since I was a child, nor did I ever notice the tree designated, but I seem now to have its bearings most forcibly impressed upon my memory.'

'Burnt Clearing!' said I, 'why, that is the very place where this she-devil's hut is built. I have very little doubt that your wild guess is right, and that the wicked old creature has really been trying to coerce your will into committing a crime, of which she would well know how to reap the profit. But listen to me: I have an idea that there is one way, and one only, in which we can save the lamb from the jaguar.'

Our consultation was long; but before it ended, Washington was quite of my way of thinking, and had entered, heart and soul, into the plan. We mounted two of the best hacks in the stable, and rode rapidly off to the town, where we had a protracted interview with Major Marsh and Dr Abel Clashman, two leading members of the permanent Vigilance Committee. We talked long: some difficulties were in our way; but when we parted, the doctor said: 'Well, gentlemen, it's ugly; but if it can be kept out of the tarnation newspapers, we won't be slack about it. At eleven, sharp!'

'Sharp,' said we, and we parted with our new allies.

We rode back as swiftly as possible, and then sallied out on foot together on a secret expedition. We returned after dark, and found that dinner had long been kept waiting for us, that Mrs Millett was vexed, and Mr Millett displeased. But we excused ourselves on the plea of a foray against the plump rice-birds, the ortolans of the Southern States, which had led us too far afield. Cook was there, as we expected; indeed, he had been in favour lately; had invited himself to dinner; and had been pressed, with Georgian hospitality, to accept a bed.

At eleven o'clock, all members of the household had, ostensibly at least, retired to rest, and all was dark and still. Caroline had been asleep for hours, exhausted and worn out. In her chamber, a feeble light burned, leaving half the room in shadow. The white bed-curtains were closely drawn. A dark figure glided into the room, turning the handle of the door with noiseless care, crossing the floor with the stealthy step of a prowling tigress, and reaching the table where stood the lamp, amid phials and cups, without causing any sound whatever.

The dim light shone upon the wrinkled face, the snow-white hair, the glowing eyes of old Zanna the negress—of 'Aunt Anne,' the trusted nurse and house-keeper. The old woman's triumphant smile would have shamed a fiend, as she drew a small bottle from her bosom, uncorked one of the phials, and mingled with the medicine it contained a few drops of a colourless fluid. The contents of the phial grew turbid and brown, then slowly resumed the original hue and clearness. The hag shook her fist with a gesture of hate at the bed and its unconscious occupant; she muttered some words, words not to be understood by Christian hearers, for they were couched in the savage tongue of her own pagan home, by the distant Niger. Then the more familiar English rose to her lips, and she murmured vaguely of her sons, of George, shot in the bush; of Moses, sold into hopeless bondage down South; and she came a step or two nearer to the bed, and shewed her teeth, still sound and white, in a sneering laugh of spite and scorn.

'Die!' she said in a hissing whisper—'die, white girl—pretty missy, die! die!' As she did so, the curtains of the bed rattled back on their rods, and flew open, while a broad blue glare of light, as if a large quantity of spirits of wine had been suddenly kindled, filled the room. But the old woman did not flee; she stood rooted to the ground, her eyeballs starting, her hands outstretched, staring with stupefied terror on the bed and on its occupant. Uttering a yell of horror that rang through the house: 'The fetch! the fetch!' she fell grovelling, face downwards, on the floor; for there sat the grim idol, its head composed of the gory skull, the ox-hide wrapping its fantastic limbs—there, in all its tawdry finery and hideous foulness, was the frightful thing before which cowering negroes, deep in the forest, had laid the offerings demanded by fraud from fear and superstition. But most impostors deceive themselves as well as others. In this case, the punishment was complete. All the household, half dressed, and bearing lights, came hurrying at the sound of that direful screech, breaking from guilty lips, moved by a guilty, tortured conscience. With the rest came Louis Cook; he started back, pale and confused, as he saw the ghastly image, and Washington and myself lifting from the floor the writhing figure of the witch. Just then, a heavy tramp of booted feet was heard, and several of the Vigilance Committee entered, armed to the teeth.

'You are my prisoner, sir!' said Major Marsh, putting his hand on Cook's shoulder, and the bully and duellist was taken as meekly as a lamb. The old woman was also secured; but no one had the presence of mind to deprive her of the phial of poison, distilled by herself, which was concealed about her person, and she drank of it, and died in convulsions. Before expiring, she confessed her crimes, and their motive, which was partly revenge, partly a desire to buy the freedom of her younger son. Cook refused to confess. The committee were averse to inflict death on a white man on such scanty evidence; but the wretch was forced to sell his property, and was driven with ignominy from the state. He joined Walker's filibusters, and perished miserably in Nicaragua. Caroline recovered, and is married to a gentleman of Virginia; Washington Millett is one of General Beauregard's staff; and I am a West-end doctor, not overburdened with practice, and very much at the reader's service.

THE HYLAS.

THE *Hylas* was the name of the yacht in which, a few years since, I used, through succeeding autumns, to accompany a near relative on boating excursions of two or three weeks in duration. All through the long winter and succeeding spring, the pretty but capacious vessel lay, with others, in a large boat-house opening into an alder-shaded creek, named the Fleet, leading in turn into a wide tidal river. Nothing more picturesque can be well imagined than the situation of this boat-house and its pretty channel. Tree-dotted meadows as flat as a bowling-green lay to the left as you entered from the river; whilst to the right stood an ancient hall, of a date long prior to the age of Elizabeth. It stood but in portion: its ivy-covered chapel had been converted into a stable; its garden, towards the front, abridged, but its splendid canopy of walnut-trees remained; and at the rear, stretching towards the Fleet, were still traces of orchard and kitchen-garden—and more than one fine pond fed by the adjacent river. Inland, on the bank above the hall, ran the highway; and on the other side stood our pretty cottage, literally embowered in vines. We cultivated our grapes with great care; and

in propitious seasons, the size and beauty of the large bunches which hung round my chamber window especially, were the wonder of those who, riding by on coach or horseback, could see over the intervening wall.

At Easter-time our dear relative would get away from his dull chamber in the Temple, and brighten us with a look in our pretty vine-clad cottage; then how busy we all would be—he away most of the day, painting, rigging, making improvements; whilst our pretty lawn in front of our house, as well as a much larger lawn we had at the top of a hill at the rear, would be covered by the great sails put out to air; the best sails, as white as snow below, perhaps the tanned sails on the hill above. The maid scoured the cooking apparatus, the nautical chest of drawers, and other things; and with men coming to and fro for this and that, we were all occupied. After a few quiet sails, the *Hylas* was moored in the alder-shadowed Fleet, her hatches put down, and our beloved relative returned to his labours and the Temple once more. Occasionally, a friend took her out for a day or two; but otherwise the *Hylas* rested in the little creek, where her masts and spars, shooting up amidst the thick foliage, were there embowered.

But autumn would come at last, serene, sunny, and fruit-laden. How much it was looked forward to, how much prepared for, I need not say. The house, always as neat as a doll's house, yet underwent a thorough refurbish: furniture rubbed, paint cleaned, muslin curtains freshly put up. Old Dann the gardener was as busy as a bee for days; and even the pretty thatched summer-house at the top of the hill, from whence we had a river-view almost equal to that from Richmond Hill, was scrubbed, and the green hillock round it shaven with a sickle. Indoors, I practised my last new piece of Hummel, or Onslow, or Thalberg, for I was in those days a most industrious pianoforte-player; and we gathered together our lately purchased books and periodicals, to shew what we had been reading, for we were incessant readers. At last our relative came, and the holidays of the *Hylas* were near.

Early in a morning, or else towards evening, our guest arrived; always with new books for us—a volume of Tennyson, a play of Sheridan Knowles, or some volume of philosophy. He was a noble scholar, and, as regards our language, a bibliomaniac such as Dibdin would have loved. He revelled in beautiful bindings and rare editions, and used books so reverently, that one would think they lived and spoke.

The first delight of meeting over, the business of the *Hylas* began. The sails, utensils, bedding, were carried down to the Fleet; the beef was roasted, the ham boiled, the tarts made. The viands were then packed in a great square wicker-basket, sundry bottles of porter were stowed in a hamper, and all carried on board. Jemmy, our man, who plied his own wherry the rest of the year, took leave of wife and children; and all being prepared, we went slowly down to the Fleet; the maid with us, carrying our best complement of cloaks, shawls, parasols, books, and so forth.

How pleasant everything looked in the roomy cabin! The bedding so nicely arranged at the far end of the seats; the wide seats themselves so roomy; the table in the midst, ending in a chest of small drawers. Each drawer had its duty—this to hold knives and forks; the other, glasses and drinking horns; the next, perhaps cups and saucers, and so on. Above the drawers was a long looking-glass; and on the cabin's roof swung fishing-rods and other like things.

We generally took our departure about noon; and once out of the Fleet, and with her sails set, the *Hylas* sped along, especially if the wind were favourable:

past the populous village; past hanging woods; past the old gray ruins of a little church that had been dismantled since the seventeenth century; past water-side inns and rustic vistas, that Gainsborough or Calcott would have revelled in. We passed careering yachts like our own, whose owners were sure to have a kindly word, and to wish *un bon voyage*; we passed wherries so heavily laden that the water washed above the gunwale, whilst others swept by us like winged birds. We generally sailed on till it grew dusk; and then, turning into a reedy creek, pursued it through the level of the marshes for a mile or more, till it terminated in a large open expanse of water, called locally a 'broad,' a mile perhaps long by half a mile wide, densely covered by reeds in some parts, whilst the larger portion was as crystal-clear as a mountain lake, and as solitary. It would now be night, so the anchor would be cast in some well-known spot amidst the reeds, and preparations made for lying-to. The sails were furled, the awning spread, a fire lighted, and the kettle boiled. We ladies meanwhile got lights, and spread the table with tea and supper combined. Then the master of the *Hylas* came in and enjoyed the peaceful meal with us. What appetites we had! How delicious the viands tasted! What tea was ever like that? When Jemmy had taken forth his meal, and all was cleared away again, then our dear companion lighted his pipe, and chatted or read to us, as the case might be. Then early, he would bid us 'good-night,' for he and Jemmy had yet their night-lines to set, and other fishing business to attend to. But he never left us till, with man's thought and woman's tenderness combined, he had seen to every little matter which would add to our repose and comfort. We then made our beds; and with the awning-covered fore-peak as our dressing-room, were as comfortable as possible.

When the master of the *Hylas* and the man had gone to bed in the little cabin behind our own, how still everything was! The cry of the night-bird, the rustle of the tall reeds against the vessel's side, or the splash of the water, if otter or rat plunged in, was the loudest sound which met the ear. Then came the profound stillness of the night, when no ear was open to even sounds like these.

A cheerful halloo would arouse us early on the morrow, so we would hasten to take our bath, with water we drew up from amidst our canopy of reeds. This was cool and abundant as a naiaid might wish. We then dressed and rolled away our beds, dried and dusted our cabin, and made all neat. Then the awning was undone, and the dear master stepped in. There was capital news to tell us: the night-lines had all taken, and eels and pike were abundant. He had also been up fishing with rod and line; so there was perch for breakfast, and fresh eggs and cream too, for Jemmy and the dogs—we always brought our dogs—had been already to a farm on the upland.

Inspired by this brave news, we ladies laid the cloth, made the tea, and enjoyed breakfast with our dear host. Then, as the morning wore on, the vessel was taken across the broad; and here, close against turfy banks, literally white with the marsh convolvulus, and shaded by picturesque trees, the anchor was cast once more. The cooking apparatus would be set on the bank, and if we liked, we went on shore, and sauntered up and down, or sat and read in the shadow of the trees, whilst our host and his man fished with the line, or netted; we meanwhile, at due intervals, bringing forth cheese and biscuits, and porter or ale for refreshment. A little beyond mid-day, the males set to and cooked some of the mighty pike and eels for dinner, whilst we ladies, as heretofore, attended to minor things. Through the afternoon, there was fishing again, sometimes a sail, or else a row in the jolly-boat: and thus the days wore on.

Presently, we recommenced our voyage, and returning to the wide river, went on with tide and press of

sail. The densely filled steam-packets, with their throngs of holiday-seekers and bands of music, the heavy freighted wherries, the rafts of floating timber, were alike left behind. Then the marsh scenery would become as flat and dreary as on the Zuyder Zee; and the little draining-mills, turning their sails monotonously round and round, gave much that was Dutch-like to the landscape. Then the water became more and more turbid and brackish, dense masses of weeds floated by, there came the unmistakable odour of the sea, and at last the distant sound of waves might be caught by one acute of ear. On we went, and as the tide fell, sand-banks and clumps of cockles and mussels were to be seen; and towards night, we would anchor near a seaport town, with nothing but its bar dividing us from the German Ocean. Sometimes we kept our home on board, and only made daily excursions to the town for sea-bathing; at others, we left the boat, and took lodgings for a week or more in the vicinity of the beach.

But oftener we kept away from the sea altogether, loving solitude and pastoral scenery far more. Turning aside just where the brackish waters began, we would enter a diverging river, and so sail on and on—beneath a picturesque old bridge crowned with ivy, no pleasant task, for it involved so much hard work with masts and sails; past monastic ruins, sinking into slow decay amidst the solitude they once adorned; past the mouths of vast decoys, half buried in a sea of reeds, and on and on till meadows took the place of marshes, and uplands crowned with farms and trees, that of dreary levels. A lofty moorland would perhaps come in view, covered by purple heather, then meadows and farms, and villages and village-spires; then alder-decked meadows, and large paper-mills, and stone-built water-side inns, standing amidst gardens which were a wilderness of floral perfumes. Or we diverged again into another great 'broad,' margined by wooded uplands; then through a great loch again into brackish water, and so within hearing of the sea. On one occasion of visiting this lake, we got aground on a vast mud-bank, where could be seen, when the tide went out, enough of mussels to have feasted all London. After many hours' weary waiting, and when we found that the vessel would not be got off without the help of a steam-tug, we went on shore, and after a weary walk of some miles through a series of sand-hills, we reached the town. The next day, the *Hylas* was tugged off the bank, and we proceeded on our way.

There was another river we used to enter from the main stream, still more solitary than any I have yet mentioned. Passing for the most part through broad levels of pasture-land, you would sail for a day and see little more than herdsmen and their cattle, or a solitary wherry slowly 'quanted' on by the two men on board, whilst a sunburnt woman sat at the tiller. Here, for miles, everything was so intensely still and lonely, that all sounds of earth seemed dead but the eternal music of the winds, the call of the birds from amidst the reeds, or the gurgle of the water, as the bows of the vessel cast it back. As to provisions, if you had neglected a supply, there was no farm or inn to aid you for many a mile. But by and by came reward enough for this solitary voyage; from the river opened a splendid inland lake, three miles long by one wide, well stocked with fish, and surrounded by enticing scenery of wood and upland. The right of fishing was reserved, but the master of the *Hylas* had always special leave to use the large reed-house in the centre. Here, therefore, after our solitary voyage, we spent many charming days.

On one occasion, we ladies did not go, for the master of the *Hylas* had friends from London, but we joined them on a given day. The voyage by water was seventy miles; the journey by land was scarcely seven, so we drove there in a friend's sociable. I well remember the delicious Michaelmas goose, the

fruit, and other good things we carried. We dined on board, enjoyed a sail afterwards, had tea in the reed-house, and then returned home.

But our excursions were not always thus *en beau*. On one occasion, we had nothing but rainy, windy weather. We took refuge in a river-side inn, where the mistress and her daughters did all they could to make us comfortable—took the bough-pot from the parlour-grate, and lighted us a fire; but all in vain; for two days it rained incessantly: the weather-wise predicted rain—more rain; so we got on board, and returned to home comforts. It was well we did so, for it rained for the next three weeks, and all the meadows and marshes were aflood.

Late one autumn, I and the dear master of the *Hylas* went a long exploring voyage through the marshes towards the Wash and beyond. We saw many interesting remains of church and abbey—their wood-carving, their painted glass, and matchless sepulchral brasses. Though drear and solitary, the scenery and country had many worthy associations. But wherever we went, and whatever we did, the days were happy days on board the *Hylas*.

THE ROSE AND THE BEE.

D'you see, my love, that joyous bee
Amid the flowers in rapture flying;
For ever roving, bright and free,
Where blooms of fairest hues are vying?
Although he sips the sparkling dew,
Which mantles on each cup of bliss,
Yet still, his passion to renew,
He seeks the rose's perfumed kiss:

And then, though many a wanton fly
In dalliance may her sweets inhale,
Her bosom breathes its richest sigh
Of fragrance on the western gale.
Then pardon me the gay transgression,
If in their freaks our own I see;
And pardon, too, the fond confession—
You are the rose, and I the bee.

Though many a brightly tinted flower
From Cupid's honeyed wreath I've stole,
To while away a languid hour,
Or chase depression from my soul;
Though softest eyes did on me beam,
Amid my sense's warm effusion,
Thy glance has swept the passing dream,
Thy voice dispelled the fond illusion.

From Mem'ry's sunny page they're past—
Oblivion's waters o'er them roll;
And I am free to own at last
That thou alone hast waked my soul;
Now after passion's short eclipse,
It would be rapture all divine,
If, like the rose, your hallowed lips
Could once again be only mine!

G. D.

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